

“Half Orc”

My friend is a half orc. I’m a wizard. He’s the muscle, and I’m the brains.

So, we’re in this dungeon, looking for treasure—and my mom comes in and tells me it’s time for dinner, which is really annoying. So I tell my friend I’ll be back pretty soon, and he’s cool with that. I go to the kitchen table, and my little sister’s there, being annoying.

I guess I must have been hungry because I ate three plates of spaghetti.

My dad asked me, “How’s school?” and I said “Fine,” and my mom said, “What did you learn today?” and I said, “Nothing.”

Then my sister stuck her tongue out at me, so when she wasn’t looking, I mixed pepper in her potatoes—a lot of pepper. She suddenly started sneezing, and just kept sneezing the rest of dinner. And no one could figure out why, even me, sorta, because I didn’t know it would work that way, pepper you ate making you sneeze. I thought that only happened if you breathed it in...and then! I had an epiphany (“epiphany,” that was one of our vocab words last week; it means “a sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something”).

But right at that moment, my mom said, “What do you mean, ‘nothing?’ You must have learned something in school today.” So I told her, “In P.E., the coach taught us, ‘There’s no ‘I’ in ‘team.’” “Huh?” she said. She was befuddled, which provided exactly the distraction I needed.

“Gotta go,” I said. Then I raced back to the dungeon as fast as I could.

I was afraid I would be too late, but my friend was still there. He’s covered in green slime, which protects him from most enemies. But of course not all. So I was relieved to see he was still okay. He was kinda pissed at me, though, because my family had taken even more time than usual asking about all the minutiae (another vocab word) of my entire day—and he and I still had a monster to slay.

The monster was guarding an emerald, and we needed to get the emerald so it could light the way for us out of the dungeon.

I bent down to scoop up some dirt from the floor of the dungeon, but I couldn’t get any. So I used my wand instead. That did work. A stream of dirt floated into my hand. I threw it at the monster.

The monster didn’t sneeze so much as go into these weird convulsions.

My friend finally figured out what I was up to. Being a half orc, he can’t run fast, but he is massive strong. I can run pretty fast, for a wizard. We both rushed over to the monster, and my friend wrested the emerald away just in time. A few seconds later, the monster completely disintegrated.

Of course my friend handed me the emerald; it floated in front of my wand and showed us the passageway out of the dungeon.

On our way out of the dungeon, my friend asked how I figured out about using the dirt, and I told him about putting pepper in my sister’s potatoes. I’m not sure he completely understood, but he said he was really impressed with my skills. I told him he’d done a great job, too, fighting the monster, and he agreed with me; orcs are not known for their modesty.

I kinda wondered a little bit then about who he really was, the half orc, and even if he was a he? What’s his name? Where does he live? Are we even in the same country?

I’m sure we’ll never meet in person. And even if we did, we wouldn’t know.

But just like when I confounded the monster with a stream of dirt from my wand, and then my friend grabbed the jewel just in time, he knows he can always rely on me, and I know I can always rely on him. And that’s more than a lot of friends can say about each other.